

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 02218 01 OF 02 070411Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 TRSE-00 /055 W
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O R 050715Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 207
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2218

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA'S 3,4 AND 7 GARBLED)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: ELECTION - LAST TWO DAYS

1. SUMMARY: WITH TWO DAYS REMAINING BEFORE ELECTIONS, THE
PNA OFFENSIVE HAS AT LAST BEEN BLUNTED, AND PPP MORALE
SEEMS TO HAVE PICKED UP. SOME VOTERS SEEM DISTURBED BY
ASGHAR KHAN'S PROMISE--LATER MODIFIED--TO RELEASE WALI
KHAN AND LEGALIZE THE NAP AND SOME MORE THOUGHTFUL VOTERS
ARE BEGINNING TO BECOME SERIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER THE PRO-
SPECT OF A NINE PARTY ALLIANCE ATTEMPTING TO GOVERN. IT
SHOULD BE CAVEATED THAT THIS PERCEPTION OF A HALT IN THE
PNA'S FORWARD MOVEMENT IS BASED ON THE VIEWS OF
BASICALLY MIDDLE CLASS, URBAN PAKISTANIS. HOWEVER,
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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 02218 01 OF 02 070411Z

WE DO NOT, NOR IN OUR VIEW DO OTHERS, HAVE AN ACCURATE
READING OF THE MOOD AND PREFERENCES OF THE 80 PERCENT OF THE
VOTERS LIVING IN THE RURAL AREAS.

2. THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IS MORE STABLE THAN IT
WAS EARLIER IN THE WEEK. WE UNDERSTAND THE MILITARY
HAS ESTABLISHED LIAISON WITH THE POLICE AND FSF IN

LAHORE AND KARACHI. IF THERE IS A MASSIVE DETERIORATION IN THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION, WE BELIEVE THE MILITARY WILL BE COMPELLED TO STEP IN TO ENSURE DOMESTIC SECURITY. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THEY WOULD ACTIVELY INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF THE PM.

3. THE PPP IS INCREASING PRESSURE ON THE BUREAUCRATS TO SUPPORT THE PARTY, BUT SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT THE POLICE AND CIVIL SERVICES WILL DO ONLY THE MINIMUM TO PROTECT THEIR OWN POSITION. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONSEQUENTLY APPOINTED PARTY FAITHFUL AS RETURNING OFFICERS IN MANY POLLING PLACES. THE SUPREME COURT ON MARCH 4 ORDERED THAT PAK TV AND RADIO MUST GIVE MORE BALANCED COVERAGE TO BOTH SIDES IN THE CAMPAIGN, A VICTORY FOR THE PNA, ALBEIT LATE IN THE CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE MARCH 7 POLLS, WHAT HAPPENS IN THE NA ELECTIONS WILL ALSO INFLUENCE THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ON THE 10TH. END SUMMARY.

4. WITH TWO DAYS REMAINING BEFORE ELECTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, PAKISTAN REMAINS RELATIVELY QUIET AS THE PPP AND PNA PLAN FOR THEIR LAST RALLIES AND PREPARE FOR ELECTION DAY. ACCORDING TO ELECTION LAW, CAMPAIGNING MUST END AT MIDNIGHT ON MARCH FIFTH, AND BOTH SIDES SAY THEY WILL COMPLY WITH THIS REQUIREMENT.

5. BOTH CONGENS KARACHI AND LAHORE REPORT THAT THE PNA OFFENSIVE, WHICH HAS BEEN BUILDING SINCE THE CAMPAIGN BEGAN, HAS AT LAST BEEN BLUNTED. ALTHOUGH CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 02218 01 OF 02 070411Z

WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE THAT THE PPP IS RALLYING FROM ITS DEFENSIVE POSITION, THE FORMERLY INEXORABLE INCREASE IN PNA STRENGTH AT LEAST SEEMS HALTED, AND MORALE IN THE PPP SEEMS TO HAVE PICKED UP. ASGHAR KHAN'S PROMISE--LATER SOMEWHAT QUALIFIED--THAT THE PNA WOULD RELEASE WALI KAHAN AND LEGALIZE THE NAP HAS AROUSED MISGIVINGS AMONG SOME PUNJABIS WHO VIEW THE NAP WITH SUSPICION AND QUESTION ITS BONA FIDES AS A TRULY NATIONAL, PRO-PAKISTAN PARTY.

6. THE PNA HAS ALSO ALLOWED GENERAL NIAZI, WHO COMMANDED PAKISTANI FORCES AT THE FALL OF DACCA, TO USE ITS PLATFORM TO CRITICIZE BHUTTO AND HIS ROLE IN 1970. THERE ARE MANY VOTERS WHO WOULD PREFER TO IGNORE PAST IGNOMINY AND ARE DISTURBED AND EMBARRASSED BY THE CAMPAIGN PRESENCE OF THE MAN WHO LED PAKISTAN'S TROOPS AT THE TIME OF THEIR WORST DEFEAT. IT IS ALSO CONJECTURED THAT THE ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL NATION-WIDE STRIKE ON FEB. 28 MAY HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON

THE PNA'S FORTUNES. FINALLY, SOME MORE THOUGHTFUL VOTERS ARE BEGINNING TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY THE POSSIBILITY OF A PNA VICTORY AND ARE BACKING AWAY FROM THE ALLIANCE BECAUSE OF THEIR CONCERN OVER ITS ABILITY TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY.

7. THIS PERCEPTION OF A HALT IN THE PNA'S FORWARD MOVEMENT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE CAVEAT THAT IT IS BASED ON THE VIEWS OF BASICALLY LITERATE, MIDDLE CLASS PAKISTANIS WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO JUDGE THE TEMPER OF THE COUNTRY. WHETHER OR NOT THE 80 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE WHICH IS RURAL BASED AND ILLITERATE IS REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NAP AND OTHER SUCH ISSUES IS AN OPEN QUESTION, AND CHANGES IN POLITICAL ATTITUDES AMONG THE MIDDLE CLASSES MAY NOT BE REFLECTED WHERE THE GREAT PREPONDERANCE OF VOTERS LIVE--IN RURAL PAKISTAN. WE DO NOT--NOR IN OUR VIEW
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PAGE 04 ISLAMA 02218 01 OF 02 070411Z

DO OTHERS--HAVE AN ACCURATE READING OF THE MOOD AND PREFERENCES OF THESE RURAL VOTERS, WHO IN 1970 CONFOUNDED ALL FORECASTS BY VOTING IN LARGE NUMBERS FOR BHUTTO'S PPP.

8. THE PRIME MINISTER CONTINUES TO PUSH HIS TIRELESS CAMPAIGN FOR ANOTHER PPP VICTORY. BOTH HE AND ASGHAR KAHAN LED LARGE RALLIES IN KARACHI ON THE SECOND AND THIRD (REPORTED SEPARATELY BY CONGEN KARACHI), AND BHUTTO HAS MANAGED TO ATTRACT RESPECTABLE SIZED CROWDS IN SOME OF THE LARGER PUNJAB CITIES. THE PM IS HAVING WHAT HAS BEEN BILLED AS THE LAST MAJOR RALLY TODAY IN LAHORE. THE PPP IS BEING PLAGUED, HOWEVER, BY AN INCREASING NUMBER OF DEFECTIONS FROM THE PARTY. SOME OF THE MORE PROMINENT DESERTERS, SUCH AS FORMER PUNJAB MINISTER SAHIBDAD KHAN AND SEVERAL FORMER MNA'S, HAVE LEFT BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT GIVEN PPP TICKETS. ALTHOUGH THIS UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE PARTY, THE FACT THEY HAVE PUBLICLY DESERTED THE PM INDICATES THEY ARE PREPARED TO BELIEVE BHUTTO IS IN TROUBLE.

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 02218 02 OF 02 050913Z
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USIE-00 INRE-00 TRSE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 /055 W
-----050924Z 040430 /12

O R 050715Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 208
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY KABUL
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AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2218

9. LAW AND ORDER--THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IS MORE STABLE THAN IT WAS EARLIER IN THE WEEK. KARACHI AND LAHORE ARE MUCH QUIETER, AND ALTHOUGH MINOR CONFRONTATIONS STILL OCCUR, THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT MAJOR ALTERCATIONS SUCH AS THE COUNTRY HAD SEEN THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND. CONGEN KARACHI REPORTS THAT ETHNIC TENSIONS IN THE CITY REMAIN HIGH, HOWEVER, WITH PATHANS AND MUHAJIRS BACKING THE PNA AGAINST THE SINDHI AND OTHER "LOCALS" WHO ARE SUPPORTING THE PPP.

10. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN KARACHI AND LAHORE, THE MILITARY HAS ESTABLISHED LIAISON WITH BOTH THE POLICE AND THE FEDERAL SECURITY FORCE (FSF). IF THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION DETERIORATES TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT PEACE CANNOT BE MAINTAINED BY LOCAL FORCES PLUS THE FSF, WE BELIEVE THE MILITARY WILL BE COMPELLED TO STEP IN TO ENSURE DOMESTIC SECURITY. THEIR ROLE, HOWEVER, WILL BE STRICTLY A LAW AND ORDER ONE, AND CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ISLAMA 02218 02 OF 02 050913Z

WE DO NOT FORESEE THE MILITARY BECOMING INVOLVED IN PARTISAN POLITICS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE FOR EXAMPLE, THEY WOULD SUPKBRT THE PRIME MINISTER IN AEBLJSQO STAY IN POWER IF HE LOSES THE ELECTION, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD PRESUMABLY STAND ASIDE AND PERMIT THE PM TO MANEUVER A NEW MAJORITY IF THESE EFFORTS DID NOT RESULT IN UNCONTROLLED LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS.

11. BUREAUCRATIC MACHINERY--THE PPP IS INCREASING

PRESSURE ON THE CIVIL SERVICE AND POLICE TO USE THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY TO SUPPORT THE PARTY ON ELECTION DAY. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT VARIOUS SOURCES IN THE SERVICES CONTEND THEY WILL PROBABLY DO ONLY THE MINIMUM TO PROTECT THEIR OWN POSITIONS. THEY ARE IN A QUANDARY FOR IF THEY DO NOT HELP THE PPP AND BHUTTO WINS THEY FEAR FOR THEIR JOBS. IF THEY HELP THE PPP AND THE PNA WINS, PNA LEADERS HAVE PROMISED TO SACK THEM.

12. AWARE THAT THE BUREAUCRACY MAY NOT SUPPORT IT ON ELECTION DAY, THE PPP--ACCORDING TO CONGEN LAHORE--IS ASSIGNING TRUSTED PPP ELEMENTS, SUCH AS RATION DEPOT SUPERVISORS, AS RETURNING OFFICERS AT POLLING PLACES. ALSO, PPP "GOONDA" SQUADS (STRONGARM UNITS) ARE BEING READIED IN CASE FORCE IS NEEDED AND THE POLICE FAIL TO SUPPORT THE PARTY. AS REPORTED EARLIER, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE PPP WILL BE RETURNED TO POWER MAY REST ON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CIVIL AND POLICE SERVICES TO HELP, AND HOW THEY WILL FINALLY REACT IS STILL UNKNOWN.

13. MEDIA--IN A NOTEWORTHY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DECISION, ON MARCH THIRD, THE SUPREME COURT MODIFIED A LAHORE HIGH COURT DECISION OF THE PREVIOUS DAY WHICH STATED THAT PAK TELEVISION AND RADIO MUST GIVE EQUAL TIME TO BOTH THE PPP AND PNA IN THEIR ELECTION COVERAGE. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 02218 02 OF 02 050913Z

ON APPEAL FROM PTV, THE SUPREME COURT FOUND THAT ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ALLOCATE EQUAL TIME DUE TO THE AVAILABILITY OF NEWS, AN ATTEMPT SHOULD ALWAYS BE MADE TO KEEP A BALANCE IN BROADCASTING WITH

REGARD TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE COURT WENT ON TO NOTE TV AND RADIO SHOULD CARRY EITHER THE LIVE VOICES OF AN EQUAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL LEADERS FROM BOTH SIDES ADDRESSING PUBLIC MEETINGS OR ALTERNATIVELY NO ONE'S LIVE VOICE SHOULD BE CARRIED. (THIS IN RESPONSE TO TELEVISION'S PRACTICE OF CARRYING TAPED EXCERPTS FROM BHUTTO'S SPEECHES, BUT NOT DOING THE SAME FOR OPPOSITION SPEAKERS.) ALTHOUGH THE COURT DECISION CAME LATE IN THE CAMPAIGN--THUKPNA HAD ONLY RECENTLY BROUGHT THE CASE TO THE LAHORE HIGH COURT--THE DECISION NEVERTHELESS IS A FURTHER POSITIVE SIGN IN WHAT HAS BEEN A SURPRISINGLY OPEN AND FREE CAMPAIGN.

14. ALTHOUGH ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE MARCH 7 POLLS, WHAT HAPPENS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO INFLUENCE THE ELECTIONS FOR THE

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES ON THE 10TH. ALTHOUGH THERE IS
A SHORTER PERIOD BETWEEN THE TWO ELECTIONS THIS YEAR
THAN THERE WAS IN 1970 WHEN THERE WAS A TEN DAY HIATUS,
THE TWO DAYS IN BETWEEN WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CHARACTER-
IZED BY HECTIC POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND TRADING WHILE
BOTH SIDES ASSESS THEIR STRENGTHS IN LIGHT OF THE
MARCH 7 RESULTS. THE WINNING PARTY IN THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WILL ENTER THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS
WITH A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE, SINCE MANY VOTERS WILL BE
WAITING TO SEE WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS BEFORE DECIDING
WHICH WAY TO VOTE ON THE TENTH.
BYROADE

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Message Attributes

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